



# THE 21st CENTURY HIGHER EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Building a Future for America's  
Minority-Serving Institutions

MARCH 22, 2001  
Education and Workforce Committee Democrats

# 21st CENTURY HIGHER EDUCATION INITIATIVE

America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and Tribally Controlled Colleges have provided millions of Americans from all backgrounds with rich and enduring higher education opportunities. They have developed innovative academic strategies, supported cutting edge research, and launched the careers of millions of today's leaders including scientists, doctors, teachers, lawyers, artists, entrepreneurs, and community and religious leaders.

Today, these institutions face new challenges as they help prepare a new generation of Americans for the 21st century. To ensure that all Americans have access to high quality education, we must ensure that all students have the financial assistance and support to start and stay in college. And we must ensure that all higher education institutions have the resources to perform vital research, succeed and prosper.

The "21st Century Higher Education Initiative" will substantially expand college opportunity through student aid and early intervention efforts; double resources to strengthen the infrastructure of minority-serving institutions; and harness the strengths of minority-serving institutions to prepare teachers and the high-tech workforce of tomorrow. It will:

**Help Make College Affordable for All Americans.** Since the passage of the GI Bill of Rights, the federal government has been a key partner to states and colleges to give all students access to higher education. Millions of Americans from low and middle-income families have attended college because of federal financial aid. Despite record levels of college enrollment, however, students from poor families who graduate from high school attend college at half the rate students from affluent families. Among low-income students, minority students earn bachelor's degrees at a substantially lower rate than white students. This disparity of opportunity is unacceptable. To help remedy it, the Initiative would:

- S Restore the purchasing power of Pell grants. The maximum Pell grant would increase from \$3,750 to \$7,000 over three years. Pell grants provide critical access to higher education, and are particularly important for minority students: About 45% of African-American and Hispanic students at four-year colleges depend on Pell grants, compared to 23% of all students. The purchasing power of the maximum Pell grant has eroded from 84% of the cost of a public university in 1976 to 39% today; a \$7,000 grant would restore its purchasing power.
- S Increase the Supplemental Equal Opportunity Grants by over \$300 million over three years. The SEOG program provides critical grant assistance to low-income students whose need is not fully met by Pell grants. The initiative would authorize \$1 billion for SEOG.
- S Increase Federal Work-Study by \$300 million over three years. This critical program leverages private-sector resources to allow students to earn money for college while learning responsibility and work skills. By connecting students with their campus communities, work-study has been shown to encourage students to continue their education.

**Promote High School Completion as a Gateway to College.** Too many young Americans drop out of college while they are still in middle or high school. Only 62 percent of Hispanics in their late twenties have a high school diploma, compared to 88 percent of all Americans.

# 21st CENTURY HIGHER EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The U.S. Department of Education has found that the intensity of high school curriculum is the single strongest predictor of college success. And one-third of college freshmen need remedial classes; these students are 60 percent less likely to complete college. The Act would:

- S Implement sustainable dropout prevention strategies at high schools, based on similar legislation introduced by Senator Bingaman. This \$250 million effort will include strengthening professional development and curriculum, planning and research, remedial education, reducing class sizes, and counseling for at-risk students.
- S Double funding for the TRIO and GEAR UP programs over three years (to \$1.5 billion and \$690 million, respectively) that intervene in the lives of low-income children and are proven to encourage academic success and college attendance for disadvantaged children. Increased funding would allow TRIO to serve 10 percent of eligible students.
- S Encourage universal access to Advanced Placement classes. AP classes allow high school students to challenge themselves in a demanding class and earn college credit. The Initiative would set a national goal of AP classes in every high school within three years. It would also expand the existing AP Incentive program to pay test fees for low-income students, help schools invest in AP curriculum and teacher training, and use new distance learning technologies to expand AP opportunities.
- S Strengthen college remedial programs through a new \$10 million demonstration program to help more students and adult high-school drop-outs receive remediation and eventually earn their college degree through partnerships between four-year colleges, community colleges, and high schools.

**Build Bridges among Colleges and Universities.** Minority-serving institutions offer a critical route to higher education for many minority students because of their low cost, location, and supportive environments. However, too many students at minority-serving community colleges fail to pursue a four-year degree, while many students at minority-serving four-year colleges have limited opportunities to seek advanced degrees. The Act would:

- S Expand opportunities for community college students to transfer to four-year colleges and universities. This new \$40 million initiative would support partnerships of minority-serving two-year colleges and four-year colleges and universities. The partnerships would create new transfer opportunities by developing articulation agreements, bridging differences in costs between two-year and four-year colleges, and providing counseling, mentoring, and support services to help community college students earn B.A. and B.S. degrees.
- S Create new opportunities for minority-college students to earn advanced degrees. The new \$40 million Dual Degrees initiative would increase opportunities for students to earn advanced degrees, including M.A.s and Ph.D.s, in fields in which they are underrepresented. Students would spend three years at a minority-serving institution and two years at a partner institution, such as a major research university, and earn a B.A. from their home institution and a B.A. or M.A. from the partner institution. Federal resources would establish articulation agreements and provide scholarships to students to bridge cost differences between minority-serving institutions and partner institutions. This initiative is based upon the Dual Degrees Engineering Program, operated by a consortia of colleges and universities and based in Atlanta, Georgia.

# 21st CENTURY HIGHER EDUCATION INITIATIVE

**Double Resources and Build Infrastructure for Developing Institutions.** In recognition of their unique importance in expanding higher education opportunities for an under-served population, the Initiative would double funding for minority-serving institutions under Titles III and V of the Higher Education over three years. In contrast, President Bush has called for only a 30 percent increase over five years. Specifically, under the Initiative:

- S Historically black colleges and universities would increase to \$370 million;
- S Historically black graduate institutions would increase to \$90 million;
- S Hispanic-serving institutions funding would increase to \$140 million, and a new initiative would provide \$90 million to improve post-baccalaureate education opportunities for Hispanic and low-income students;
- S Strengthening institutions would increase to \$150 million;
- S Tribally controlled colleges and universities would increase to \$45 million; and
- S Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions would increase to \$20 million.

**Preserve Historic Landmarks.** One hundred and three historically black colleges have over 700 properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but these facilities require \$755 million in repairs. To preserve these national treasures and enable historically black colleges to face the challenges of the 21st century, the Initiative would authorize \$60 million a year to preserve the most dilapidated historic facilities.

**Recruit Minority Teachers.** Our nation needs 2 million new teachers over the next 10 years to meet rising enrollments and replace retiring teachers. Minorities are an untapped resource in meeting this challenge: only 13% of teachers are minorities. The Initiative includes \$30 million for new Collaborative Centers of Excellence in Preparation to strengthen teacher preparation programs at minority-serving colleges, increase the use of technology in those programs, and help students meet teacher certification requirements. It includes a new \$20 million demonstration program on effective teacher recruitment and preparation practices, including mentoring, student loan forgiveness, and assistance in receiving teacher certification. It establishes Byrd teachers scholarships for students planning to enter the teaching profession. Finally, it includes a provision-based on legislation by Sen. Tom Daschle and Rep. Darlene Hooley to provide up to \$15,000 in student loan forgiveness to teachers at tribal colleges.

**Prepare the 21st Century Workforce.** Studies show that minority-serving institutions face a serious “digital divide” in providing student Internet access, high-speed connectivity and sufficient infrastructure. The Initiative would create a \$250 million initiative-based on proposals by Rep. Edolphus Towns and Sen. Max Cleland to wire campuses, acquire equipment, and train educators and students in the use of technology. The Initiative would also increase funding for the Minority Science and Engineering Improvement Program five-fold to \$40 million.